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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkey-Iraq Sign MOU against Terror during Maliki Visit
All papers give extensive front-page coverage to the Ankara visit of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki with a high level delegation. Papers have mixed reactions to the visit, with the Islamist papers viewing the signing of a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) regarding cooperation against PKK activities in Iraq as a "positive development." Mainstream papers as well as Cumhuriyet and Radikal claim Turkey and Iraq have failed to sign an "agreement" to combat terror, but "signed an MOU" instead, with some claiming the president of the Kurdish regional administration, Massoud Barzani, "intervened to prevent an agreement." Cumhuriyet says that "once again, Turkey sees no forward steps from Iraq against the PKK." Papers note Erdogan and Maliki agreed to sign an agreement with regard to cooperation against terror "in two months." Responding to press questions after meeting with Erdogan, Maliki said the agreement covered "the Iraqi Kurdish administration as well."

Papers also report the two delegations signed another MOU on economic cooperation, according to which Turkey would build power plants in Iraq, and Iraqi natural gas to Europe would be routed through Turkey. Papers and television reports say if finalized, the deal would help Turkey become an effective energy center.

Editorial Commentary on Maliki Visit
Business daily Referans columnist Cengiz Candar observes: "The Maliki visit to Turkey is not a 'dramatic' moment in history. Turkey can never achieve tangible and meaningful results unless Ankara develops a direct relationship with the Iraqi Kurds, and puts the PKK problem within the framework of that context. The most striking lesson of the Maliki visit for Turkey should have been that Turkey can neither solve the PKK problem nor emerge as a regional power in the Middle East without ending its obsession of basing its foreign policy as well as ties with the US solely on the PKK question."

In tabloid Posta Mehmet Ali Birand notes the "chaotic" political

situation in Baghdad, saying it would not be realistic for Turkey to expect Maliki to take effective measures against the PKK: "In talks with visiting Iraqi PM yesterday, Ankara will ask Maliki to persuade Massoud Barzani to move against the PKK in northern Iraq. Maliki, however, is in no position to ask anything from the Kurds due to the Kirkuk referendum controversy... Barzani bargains with Turkey saying the PKK will be controlled if Turkey stays out of Kirkuk and does not intervene into northern Iraq militarily. Turkey should understand the tough situation Maliki has been going through, and should not expect much."

In tabloid Star columnist Nasuhi Gungor praises the AKP government for taking "bold forward steps" with regard to the Kurdish problem, establishing ties with the leading Sunni groups in Iraq and also telling the Iraqi Shiites that "Iran is not your only door to open to the world." Gungor continues: "the presence of FM Zebari and Baghdad's anti-terror envoy al-Waili in the high-level Iraqi delegation visiting Turkey shows Turkey's determination in the fight against terrorism. There are, however, no easy solutions; if Turkey wants to take significant forward steps, it needs to abandon some political habits such as turning a blind eye to some developments in Iraq. The July 22 elections were actually an expression of this fact."

Uncertainty over Presidency Causes Controversy

All papers continue speculation with regard to the names the AKP will nominate for parliamentary speaker and president. Former Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc implied at a press briefing Tuesday he wants the post of Justice Minister in the new cabinet. Arinc said he won't run for Parliament Speaker. Mainstream papers say Koksal Toptan has emerged as Erdogan's favorite candidate for the post.

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Hurriyet claims Prime Minister Erdogan plans to give the presidency to an AKP deputy whose wife does not wear the Islamic-style headscarf, rather than offer it to Abdullah Gul. Hurriyet, Radikal and Cumhuriyet claim some AKP members believe Gul would be a very successful president, but that a new, compromise candidate would be better in avoiding new tensions. They expect Gul not to run. Milliyet notes that the presidential issue might lead to a rift between Erdogan and Gul. Vatan speculates Erdogan does not want Gul confined to the presidential palace, but wants to share government responsibilities with him. Supporters of Gul, however, say that Gul has to follow the preferences of voters who showed powerful support for the AKP in the elections. Yesterday Arinc said, in remarks interpreted by mainstream press as a warning against Gul, all party members should help facilitate the PM's tough job now.

Violence in Southeast Turkey Continues

All papers report that the funeral of the officer who was killed in a PKK landmine blast in the Diyarbakir province was held in Ankara Tuesday, with the participation of President Sezer, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, some cabinet ministers and military commanders. Papers report Gul remained silent when the wife of the martyred officer said she didn't want to see any AKP members in the funeral. Another lieutenant killed by a PKK landmine in Hakkari was laid to rest in Istanbul.

Greek Lobby Introduces Anti-Turkey Bills to Congress

Hurriyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet and Radikal report the Greek lobby in the US has introduced to the US House two separate bills demanding Turkey pull back its troops from Turkish Cyprus. The bills say Turkey has "invaded" Cyprus, and US weapons were illegally used in the invasion. Hurriyet says the Greek lobby "routinely" introduces anti-Turkey bills into Congress on the eve of the anniversary of the Turkish military operation against Cyprus and during US election campaigns.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Main water pipelines have burst in Ankara, causing floods which

damaged more than 100 shops and houses in the Yenimahalle district.

- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP acknowledged in an evaluation of July 22 election results that the party has failed to bridge the peoples of Turkey.
- Former AKP MP Ertugrul Yalcinbayir said the AKP administration was unfair in picking members of delegations traveling abroad on official visits.
- Turkish GSM operator Turkcell plans to join mobile license tenders in Iraq and Kuwait.

International News

- The Pentagon said the US has around 162,000 troops in Iraq now, more than at any previous time in the war.
- President Karzai said the Taliban is a danger to children, aid workers and other innocent people, but is a "defeated" force that is not a threat to the government of Afghanistan.
- Tbilisi handed the Russian Embassy a note of protest on Tuesday concerning the violation of Georgian airspace and the bombardment of the Gori district by unidentified aircraft that flew from Russia.
- The British government confirmed Tuesday a second outbreak of foot

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and mouth disease in a herd of cattle in southern England.

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